

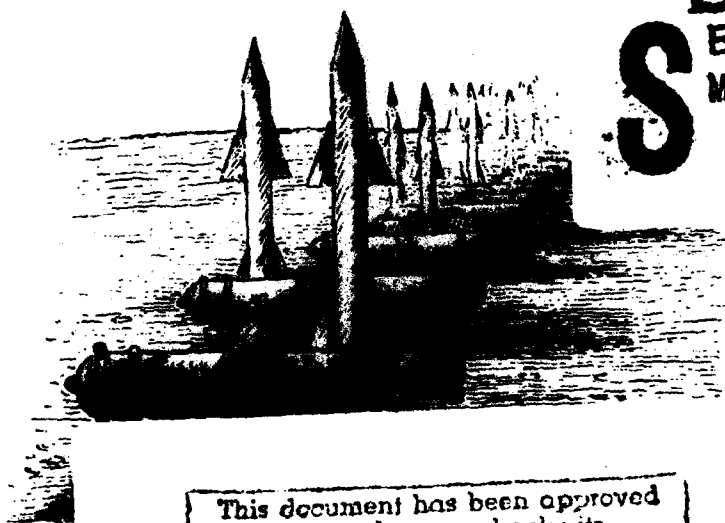
SSI

AD-A249 978



(2)

**CONVENTIONAL FORCES  
AND THE FUTURE OF DETERRENCE**



**DTIC**  
**ELECTE**  
**MAY 07 1992**  
**S D D**

This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

**Gary L. Guertner**  
**Robert Haffa, Jr.**  
**George Quester**

**92-12067**

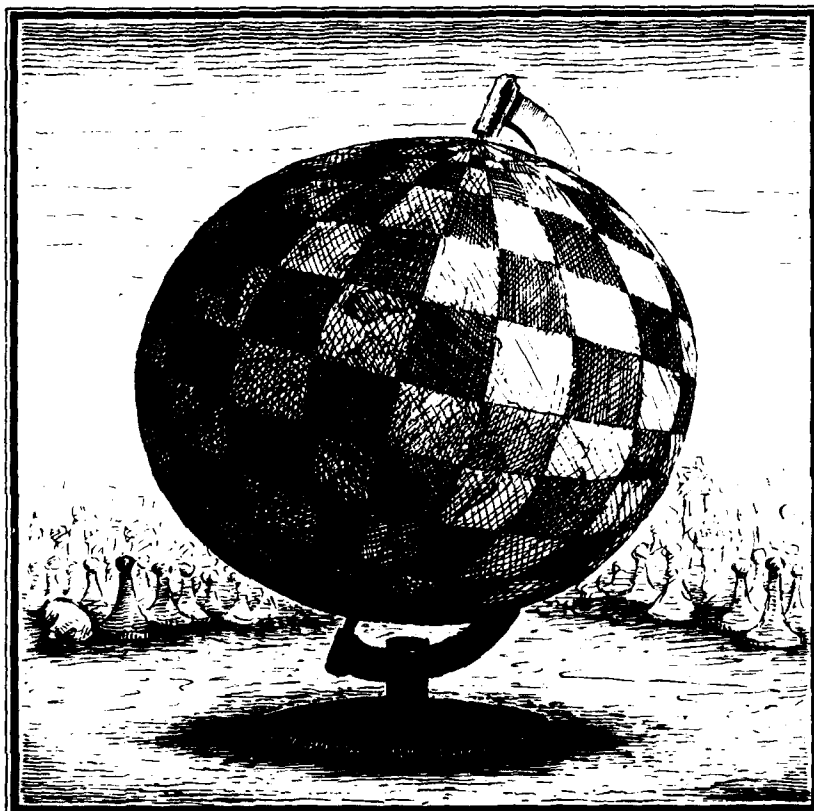


**92 5 04 013**

THIS STUDY WAS PREPARED FOR THE

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

# Third Annual Conference on Strategy



• "The Search for Strategy"

February 1992

Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

**CONVENTIONAL FORCES  
AND THE FUTURE OF DETERRENCE**

**Gary L. Guertner  
Robert Haffa, Jr.  
George Quester**

**March 5, 1992**

**STRATEGIC CONCEPTS  
IN NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY SERIES**

## **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. This report is approved for public release; distribution unlimited. Portions may be quoted or represented without permission, provided that a standard source credit line is included.

## **COMMENTS**

Comments pertaining to this publication are invited and may be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050. Comments also may be conveyed by calling the Conference Organizer, Dr. Gary L. Guertner, commercial (717)245-3234 or DSN 242-3234.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

These papers were originally presented at the U.S. Army War College Third Annual Strategy Conference held on February 13-14, 1992, with the assistance of the Office of Net Assessment. The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish the papers as part of its Conference Series.

# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	v
<b>Introduction</b> Gary L. Guertner .....	1
<b>Chapter</b>	
<b>1. The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies and Forces to Underwrite a New World Order</b> Robert P. Haffa, Jr .....	5
<b>2. Conventional Deterrence: The Past as Prologue</b> George H. Quester .....	31
<b>Conclusions</b> Gary L. Guertner .....	53
<b>About The Contributors</b> .....	63



Accession For	
NTIS CRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification .....	
By .....	
Distribution / .....	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

## FOREWORD

The authors of these essays examine the transferability of cold war deterrence theories to the New World Order. Robert Haffa develops a detailed theory of conventional deterrence and George Quester examines the lessons of conventional deterrence before the cold war. Haffa looks to the future, Quester to the lessons of history before Hiroshima.

Together, these studies conclude that conventional deterrence theories and strategies of the past were severely undermined by their subordination to a bipolar strategic nuclear competition. Conditions now exist, the authors argue, for a coherent concept of general, extended conventional deterrence.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish these studies as a contribution to the strategic debate.



KARL W. ROBINSON  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute

# INTRODUCTION

Gary L. Guertner

These studies identify theories and strategies of nuclear deterrence that appear transferable to conventional deterrence in a multipolar world. One analytical obstacle to that transfer is semantic. The simultaneous rise of the cold war and the nuclear era brought about a body of literature and a way of thinking in which deterrence became virtually synonymous with nuclear weapons.

In fact, deterrence has always been pursued through a mix of nuclear and conventional forces. The force mix changed throughout the cold war in response to new technology, anticipated threats, and fiscal constraints. There have been, for example, well-known cycles in both American and Soviet strategy when their respective strategic concepts evolved from nuclear-dominant deterrence (Eisenhower's massive retaliation and its short-lived counterpart under Khrushchev), to the more balanced deterrence (Kennedy to Reagan) of flexible response which linked conventional forces to a wide array of nuclear capabilities in a "seamless web" of deterrence that was "extended" to our NATO allies.

Early proponents of nuclear weapons have tended to view nuclear deterrence as a self-contained strategy, capable of deterring threats across a wide spectrum of conflict. By contrast, proponents of conventional forces have always argued that there are thresholds below which conventional forces pose a more credible deterrent. Moreover, there will always be nondeterrable threats to American interests that will require a response, and that response, if military, must be commensurate with the levels of provocation. The threat of nuclear weapons against a Third World country, for instance, would put political objectives at risk because of worldwide reactions and the threat of horizontal escalation.

The end of the cold war has dramatically altered the "seamless web" of deterrence and decoupled nuclear and

conventional forces. Nuclear weapons have a declining political-military utility once the threshold of deterring a direct nuclear attack against the territory of the United States is crossed.

As a result, the post-cold war period is one in which stability and the deterrence of war are likely to be measured by the capabilities of conventional forces. Ironically, the downsizing of American and Allied forces is occurring simultaneously with shifts in the calculus of deterrence that call for conventional domination of the force mix.

Downsizing is driven by dramatic fiscal constraints as the United States confronts serious domestic problems. The political dynamics of this process, whether motivated by slogans of "America first" or by the economic instincts to save only the best (i.e., job-producing sectors) of the defense industrial base, threaten the development of a coherent post-cold war deterrent strategy. These studies are designed to give policy makers and force planners theoretical guidance for building (or salvaging) a force structure capable of deterring or defeating military threats to American interests.

Critics of conventional deterrence argue that history has demonstrated its impotence. By contrast, nuclear deterrence of the Soviet threat bought 45 years of peace in Europe. Our response to this standard critique is threefold: First, conditions now exist (and were demonstrated in the Gulf War) in which the technological advantages of American conventional weapons and doctrine are so superior to the capabilities of all conceivable adversaries that their deterrence value against direct threats to U.S. interests is higher than at any period in American history.

Second, technological superiority and operational doctrine allow many capabilities previously monopolized by nuclear strategy to be readily transferred to conventional forces. For example, Robert Haffa's study describes how conventional forces now have a combination of range, accuracy, survivability and lethality to execute strategic attacks, simultaneously or sequentially, across a wide spectrum of target sets to include counterforce, command and control



(including leadership), and economic. George Quester looks at "deterrence before Hiroshima" and identifies strategic lessons that are applicable to post-cold war conventional deterrence.

Third, critics of conventional deterrence have traditionally set impossible standards for success. Over time, any form of deterrence may fail. We will always confront some form of nondeterrable threat. Moreover, deterrence is a renewable commodity. It wears out and must periodically be renewed. Deterrence failures provide the opportunity to demonstrate the price of aggression, rejuvenate the credibility of deterrence (collective or unilateral), and establish a new period of stability. In other words, conventional deterrence can produce long cycles of stability instead of the perennial or overlapping intervals of conflict that would be far more likely in the absence of a carefully constructed U.S. and allied conventional force capability.

How we respond to deterrence failures will determine both our credibility and the scope of international stability. Figure 1 summarizes what we believe are reasonable standards for judging conventional deterrence.

### Conventional Deterrence and International Stability

Period of Stability →	Deterrence Failure →	Stability Restored —OR—	Instability Spreads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Military technology advances</li> <li>● Weapons proliferate</li> <li>● Political and economic conflicts flare</li> <li>● Incentives for war increase</li> <li>● Risk of miscalculation increases</li> <li>● Deterrence fails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Crisis or war</li> <li>—Collective security</li> <li>—Collective defense</li> <li>—Unilateral action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aggression is countered</li> <li>● Conventional forces/doctrine demonstrates capabilities</li> <li>● Conventional deterrence revitalized</li> <li>● New period of stability begins</li> <li>● U.S. interests protected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aggression succeeds</li> <li>● Deterrence fails</li> <li>● Utility of aggression demonstrated</li> <li>● Period of instability extended in scope and duration</li> <li>● U.S. interests at risk</li> </ul>

Figure 1.

Long periods of stability may or may not be attributable to the success of deterrence. In any case, no deterrence system or force mix can guarantee an "end to history." Paradoxically, stability is dynamic in the sense that forces are constantly at work to undermine the status quo. Those forces, also summarized in Figure 1, mean that deterrence failures are, over time, inevitable. The United States should, therefore, base its military strategy on weapons that can be used without the threat of self-deterrence or of breaking up coalition forces needed for their political legitimacy and military capability. If we are serious about deterring regional threats on a global scale, this strategic logic will push us into a post-cold war deterrence regime dominated by conventional forces.

Many regional crises may be precipitated by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. U.S. strategy will require a delicate balance not to give incentives to that very threat. A reassuring posture, in the eyes of regional actors and global partners, will require reexamination of deterrence in a new multipolar context. These studies are a start in that direction.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THE FUTURE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE: STRATEGIES AND FORCES TO UNDERWRITE A NEW WORLD ORDER**

**Robert P. Haffa, Jr.**

### **Introduction.**

The United States is currently embarked on a search for a post-cold war military strategy; the military strategies developed in support of post-war containment of the former Soviet Union are quickly being set aside. In deliberating on the role of deterrence within that future military strategy, we immediately encounter some theoretical and definitional problems. If strategy is defined as a means of matching ends and means, then deterrence has often, during the cold war years, been described as a *strategy* that linked the objective of national security with the means needed to deter any aggression threatening the interests of the United States. As a grand strategy, therefore, deterrence also became an objective, and the military strategies designed in its support led to the means—the forces planned to underwrite deterrence. Now, in a new era, U.S. security interests endure, but the perception of the threat has eroded and the relevance of deterrence as an objective, or as a guide to military strategy and force planning, is called into question. Does deterrence have a future?

The thesis of this chapter is that deterrence, particularly conventional deterrence,<sup>1</sup> does have a future, but one very different from the way in which it was conceptualized and applied during the cold war. The United States now faces a multipolar international political system, considerably altered from its bipolar predecessor, that may be characterized by the

proliferation of advanced weaponry and armed conflict. However, there has been little thought given to the transferability of the theories and strategies of cold war conventional deterrence to this New World Order. Examining the use of conventional military power to deter in the future requires us to separate conventional deterrence from its cold war past, when conventional threats were subordinated to those of theater or strategic nuclear weapons use. Therefore, this study briefly reviews the theoretical foundations of conventional deterrence, questions the application of that theory to military strategy in light of a changed international political system and revolutionary conventional military capabilities, and suggests the strategic and force planning implications of adapting conventional deterrence to meet the challenges of a new world order.

### **The Theoretical Foundations of Conventional Deterrence.**

Can we apply the tenets of classical deterrence theory to the new world order? There are some initial issues that we must deal with in thinking about the future of conventional deterrence. The first goes to the fundamental changes that are occurring in the international political system and the future U.S. role in that system. Whatever the new world order may turn out to be, it is not likely to be orderly, nor conflict-free. Historical grievances, unconstrained ambition, militant ideology, armed coercion and the continued anarchical nature of the international system will provide plenty of opportunity and motivation for armed conflict—while making threats and planning contingencies difficult to foresee. Although democracies may be unlikely to go to war against each other, democratic states will remain decidedly in the minority. And the results of experiments with democracy in some states, as recent events in Haiti, Algeria and Georgia suggest, may promote neither domestic nor international tranquillity.

Within this new world order, the United States retains vital interests and, despite some isolationist sentiments being expressed in the polls, will surely remain fully engaged in that system in pursuit of its political, economic and strategic

interests.<sup>2</sup> The rise of an increasingly global economy, on which American well-being and quality of life depends, also argues that a return to pre-World War isolationism is not very likely.

As the United States perceives adversaries in pursuing its interests in the new world order, the theories of deterrence developed as a guide to policy during the cold war years are likely to be applied. That's because, in addition to the perceived success of those policies, deterrence goes to the heart of the central questions of international politics: How is force manipulated to attain political ends? How can wars be avoided?<sup>3</sup> Although we have seen neither the end of history's dialectical struggles nor the end of war, it is realistic as well as idealistic to continue to work toward an international system in which armed conflict becomes less probable, less destructive and less costly. And although some universal concept of deterrence to render war obsolete—that all parties might calculate a negative cost benefit to the use of military force—may appear utopian at the end of mankind's bloodiest century, deterrence will remain an attractive way to exert U.S. influence in the world and to dissuade would-be aggressors from challenging U.S. interests.<sup>4</sup>

To think about applying concepts of deterrence in this new post-cold war world, we need to define some terms and examine the formulation of classic deterrence theory as it has been applied to conventional deterrence. In its most general form, deterrence is simply the persuasion of one's opponent that the costs and risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits. The classic concentration of deterrence theory, and the focus of this study as well, has been on using *military* capability to deter unwanted *military* acts. Thus, deterrence, for our purpose here, can be defined as a "policy that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the costs of using military force to resolve political conflict will outweigh the benefit."<sup>5</sup> In deterrence terms, the primary function of military force should be to prevent its reciprocal use by one's opponents.

Is this formulation of deterrence, fashioned in the nuclear age, still relevant? There was, as George Quester describes

in the next chapter, deterrence before Hiroshima, but conventional deterrence theory, as we have most recently known it, has been strongly influenced by the bipolar, nuclear, strategic U.S.-USSR relationships of the cold war era.<sup>6</sup> What can we learn from classic deterrence theory that applies to concepts of conventional deterrence in a very different world? To answer that question, we need to remind ourselves of some of the requirements, components and—critiques of deterrence theory.<sup>7</sup>

The components of deterrence normally include the following requirements:

- *Capability*—the acquisition and deployment of military forces able to carry out plausible military threats to retaliate.
- *Credibility*—the declared intent and believable resolve to protect a given interest.
- *Communication*—relaying to the potential aggressor, in an unmistakable manner, the capability and will to carry out the deterrent threat.

These requirements, formulated principally at the level of strategic nuclear deterrence, have also been applied to deterrent confrontations involving conventional forces. Moreover, in addition to these "requirements," a considerable amount of theoretical work has been done in an attempt to define and differentiate among the ways in which that theory might be applied:<sup>8</sup>

- We realize there is a difference between *immediate* deterrence (a potential attacker is actively considering the use of force, and the deterrer, aware of that threat, issues a counterthreat to deter) and *general* deterrence (the possibility of armed conflict is present, but the potential attacker is not actively considering the use of force to threaten the interests of the deterrer).
- We understand the difference between *pure* or *fundamental* deterrence (we are eyeball-to-eyeball

with the adversary and, hopefully, he blinks) and *extended* deterrence (in which the objective is to defend allies and friends from attack). In the cold war years, the United States focused on the *global* deterrence of a single adversary on a *regional* basis, and now, in a new world order, is attempting to transition to the regional deterrence of multiple actors on a global basis.

- We know the difference between strategic nuclear deterrence (the level at which the majority of the theorizing has occurred, at which the use of intercontinental thermonuclear weapons has been threatened, and at which deterrence is usually thought to have held) and *conventional* deterrence (the level that has received considerably less attention, at which, by definition, threats to use unconventional weapons of mass destruction are excluded, and at which deterrence, arguably, has been prone to fail). An important distinction drawn during cold war formulations of this dichotomy, but subject to considerable question in the present environment, is that in cases of strategic nuclear deterrence, the costs of deterrent failure are inherently unacceptable, while in conventional deterrent situations the costs are more bearable, and can, therefore, be traded for political or other gain. Theoretical discussions of deterrence have made clear that the range of likely cost/benefit calculations shifts dramatically when the deterrent calculus of strategic nuclear warfare is compared with regional conventional conflict. In the case of conventional deterrence, the actual use of force is not so destructive as to be completely irrational in the sense of not serving any reasonable ends.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the richness of this body of theory, classic formulations of deterrence, even in the purest of strategic nuclear deterrent situations, have encountered considerable criticism.<sup>10</sup> The most significant include:

- ↳ Although it can be argued that nuclear deterrence worked during the cold war, we do not know that for

sure. (The USSR may never have wished to invade Europe nor to attack the United States with nuclear weapons.) It is very difficult to prove deterrent successes because that would require showing why an event did *not* occur. There is inherent uncertainty about the antecedent causes one cites in such cases—other plausible factors can always be suggested.

- The emphasis on the rational calculation of the cost of a retaliatory response has also been faulted in deterrence theory; policymakers who start wars may pay more attention to their own domestic needs or to other internal or external factors than to the military capabilities or options of their possible adversaries or to the potential severity of the outcome.
- Deterrence theory has also been criticized for contributing to a spiral of conflict. The threat of retaliation may be so great and so destabilizing that it becomes in the aggressor's interest to preempt or escalate—the classic "security dilemma" that acting to enhance one's own security may weaken that of one's potential adversary.
- Deterrence at conventional levels has tended to "fail." On one hand, it has been argued that the use of conventional military force has not always equated to a failure of deterrent doctrine. Unless the requirements for deterrence were put in place, the theory could not be expected to hold; deterrence theory, owing to its incompleteness, could not be held accountable for the misapplications of deterrent strategy in American foreign policy. Therefore, deterrence failures were not inconsistent with deterrence theory, provided they could be attributed to the absence of a clear commitment or to insufficient capability or credibility.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it has been argued that, because the risks of conventional conflict could be perceived as relatively modest, the costs of choosing to go to conventional war, even if the likelihood of attaining a military victory was



granted little confidence, could easily be outweighed by perceived political benefits.<sup>12</sup>

The differences between the perceived costs and risks of nuclear versus conventional deterrence are very important for our discussion here. Bipolar nuclear deterrence has a number of special properties that make its costs and risks relatively easy to calculate: two principal actors, well-defined strike scenarios, a finite number of weapons planned against a well-known target set, calculable and prohibitive losses under any plausible exchange. However, past attempts to conduct similar simulations at a conventional level, particularly when conventional deterrent strategies were often underpinned by theater or strategic nuclear weapons, have tended to make analysts and policymakers see conventional deterrence as less rigorous, far more context-dependent and, ultimately, far more unreliable as a guide to strategy. That situation has changed. It has changed in terms of the nature and capabilities of the actors the United States may be attempting to deter in the new world order, and it has changed owing to the revolution in conventional military capabilities (e.g., space reconnaissance, global command and control, precision weapons and stealth technology) that has occurred over the last decade. For example, the development and deployment of survivable conventional delivery platforms and very precise munitions recently displayed in the Gulf War—the F-117s, with a probability of target destruction of about .8, approximated the requirements of the strategic nuclear SIOP—suggest that conventional force has immediately become more punishing, more usable and, therefore, more credible.

In spite of these changes which we might, with apologies to Thomas Kuhn, characterize as the signs of a "paradigm shift," the theoretical model of a conventional deterrent situation, at this time, remains essentially unchanged:

- A potentially hostile power displays an interest and a capability, if not an immediate intent, to encroach on or to directly attack nation-states, other international actors, or geographic/resource interests in which the United States has a major or vital interest in preserving the status quo.

- Such attacks can be deterred if that power calculates the results from that prospective military action to be problematic and unattractive, i.e., the United States will defend that state, region or interest and force the attacker to pay high costs.

Therefore, many of those searching for a post-cold war strategy believe that much of the deterrence theory developed in the past is still relevant; the requirements of capability, credibility and communication will continue to apply in the future. And while the central focus of the deterrent relationship has become multipolar and less nuclear-intensive, these were not relationships left unconsidered in the original development of the theory. It seems clear, therefore, that reinforcing the logic of conventional deterrence on its would-be adversaries should be the main objective of U.S. defense policy over the next decade or so. The principal stumbling block, in attempting to apply that deterrence theory to a coherent military strategy, appears to be the tendency of conventional deterrence to "fail." If conventional rather than nuclear forces are about to assume a central role in deterring conflict, theoretical work now needs to be focused on the use or threatened use of conventional force. How, in a new world order, can a policy of conventional deterrence be communicated and a supporting military strategy and force structure be justified? One unconventional proposition is that a past "failure" of conventional deterrence may be essential to a future deterrent success: *in order to communicate a credible deterrent threat, capable conventional military force must first be used.*

### **Applying Deterrence Theory to Conventional Military Strategy.**

In the post-Gulf War world, deterrent theory fashioned during the cold war may still prove helpful, but the implementation of deterrent strategy is likely to be considerably different. In other words, while the *requirements* of deterrence may be little changed, past formulations of conventional deterrent *strategies, or goals*, focusing on large ground armies facing each other across a central front may become increasingly irrelevant (although such a confrontation

may yet remain, as in Korea, and can be created elsewhere, as in Kuwait).

There have been some major studies of conventional deterrence strategies to this point,<sup>13</sup> but it is not clear that they are very transferable to the deterrent problems of the future. For example, in the nuclear-dominated deterrent studies of the cold war past, conventional deterrence has been seen as:

- A "handmaiden" to containment of the USSR—applied in a bipolar setting, not generally applicable to less simple and less polarized crises.
- Appropriate only in support of "symmetrical" approaches to containment in order to match the enemy's moves at the level of provocation, e.g., NSC-68, and "Flexible Response." Asymmetrical responses (shifting the nature of one's reaction into avenues better suited to one's strengths against the adversary's weaknesses) relied ultimately on threats of nuclear escalation.
- Most valuable for its ability to buy time to resolve disagreements peaceably.
- A *defensive* application of deterrence strategy. "Flexible response" in NATO Europe implied deterrence at all levels, but was much weaker (purposefully?) at the conventional level, and was politically restricted from preemptive or offensive options.
- Deterrence principally by *denial*—blocking the enemy's military objectives through the attrition of his attacking forces. Deterrence by *punishment*, that is, reaching over the battlefield to target the aggressor's leadership and infrastructure was left for nuclear weapons.
- A method of influencing primarily an opponent's political calculus of the acceptable costs and risks of his potential initiative, rather than threatening overwhelming punishment and societal destruction.

Conventional forces did not provide the means to deter by force alone and had to be supplemented by diplomatic, political, and economic instruments. Conventional deterrence, unable to be operationalized at solely a military level, became very messy, very political, very context-dependent.

- A means of *extending* deterrence to allies and friends, but ultimately dependent on the credibility of a U.S. nuclear commitment. Conventional deterrence in Europe, for example, could not rely solely on the stationing of U.S. troops there (although that presence was clearly important politically and militarily), but became an integral part of a broader, multifaceted influence process that, in the end, relied on nuclear threats.

Because conventional deterrence during the cold war relied to such an extent on its coupling with nuclear threats, past military strategies of conventional deterrence, as outlined above, are much less relevant to the new world order than is the body of theory examined in the first section of this report. For example, as the theory reminded us, most "failures" of conventional deterrence have resulted from a lack of credibility in the deterrent threat. Although capability may be evident and an interest communicated, the resolve of the deterrer is arguably the most difficult element of the deterrent equation to structure and to assess. Can the credibility of a conventional deterrent be enhanced for more effective application in the future? The requirements and applications of deterrence theory developed in the previous section suggest three areas of emphasis: (1) the visibility of the military force; (2) a documented record of willingness to use force in the past; and (3) the rationality of the use of force once deterrence has failed.

*The Visibility of Military Force.* One of the critical requirements for deterrence has been substantial U.S. forces deployed overseas, not merely as a symbol or a tripwire, but as a significant military force to be reckoned with. If deterrence is to be extended, it must be seen to exist. The presence of U.S. conventional forces probably acted as a restraint on the spread of nuclear weapons to our allies, unless they found our

assurances incredible (France), or we lacked the in-place treaties and troops (Israel). A new military strategy based on conventional deterrence must pose a "virtual presence," even in a period of U.S. military retrenchment and overseas base closures. For future U.S. conventional forces to deter, they must maintain some form of visibility in order to be perceived as credible and capable.

*The Willingness to Use Force.* Conventional deterrence "failures" have not been seen as inconsistent with deterrence theory, provided that failing could be attributed to the absence of a clear commitment or to insufficient credibility. Therefore, it was postulated, actions could be taken to forestall deterrence failures: conveying an early commitment, demonstrating resolve in addition to declaring interest, pointing to past uses of force. In post-cold war conventional deterrence, however, deterrence "failures" may be part of the solution as well as part of the problem. It may be implicit that, owing in part to a past U.S. declaratory policy and practice of preferring diplomatic or economic instruments to the use of military force, potential aggressors may simply not be persuaded that the United States will readily respond with force when its interests are threatened. It may have to become explicit, therefore, that *the use of force may be necessary in some cases for deterrence to hold in other crises*. In the past, the question has been asked if leaders of democratic states needed to commit armed forces over relatively unimportant issues in an attempt to establish credibility in more vital, yet more risky, regions. Deterrence theory stressed that not being tough enough in a situation may bring peace only at the expense of one's image of resolve and, therefore, at the cost of long-term deterrence and stability.<sup>14</sup> The argument here is that the use of conventional force is necessary to enhance credibility in the new world order, and that it now can be used in support of the most vital interests without undue risk. Thus, a theoretical deterrence "failure," such as in the Gulf War, may have significant strategic implications for the future of conventional deterrence.

*The Rationality of the Use of Force.* Somewhat ironically, despite its "failures," conventional deterrence is theoretically more credible in terms of carrying out deterrent threats than is

nuclear deterrence. That's because, once nuclear deterrence fails, it may be irrational for the deterrer to respond to the challenge owing to the enormous destruction to his own society that may result. In the words of Paul Nitze, he may be self-deterred.<sup>15</sup> A conventional deterrent, however, can be made to appear more certain and, therefore, more credible: rationality does not have to fail; the nation does not have to threaten to "stumble into war" in order to respond; doomsday forecasts do not have to be considered. In practice, as well as in theory, there are more likely to be greater risks and uncertainties resulting from *not carrying out* a conventional deterrent threat than in acting to support declared policy. The operational implication of that theoretical principle is a strategy of conventional deterrence that allows for the likely use of military force.

A central point of these arguments—overlooked in past conventional deterrence theory—is that the use of conventional force, presumed, in the past, to be a "failure" of conventional deterrence, can in the future be a major contributor to the deterrence of conventional conflict. If that is so, the problem now is that much on which the United States previously constructed its conventional deterrent is going away: U.S. base structure overseas is being rapidly drawn down, and the United States is moving toward a smaller military relying on "forward presence" rather than "forward deployment," with diminished power projection assets. This brings into serious question the ability of U.S. strategy and forces to meet the requirements of capability, credibility and communication. What military strategies are available to match an objective of conventional deterrence with fewer forces stationed abroad and fewer forces available at home?

When we consider the strategies of conventional deterrence that have dominated the cold war years, we find them inadequate in meeting the challenges of the new world order. For example, John Mearsheimer argued that the essence of conventional deterrence was being able to halt an enemy breakthrough, that, in turn, led to a successful *blitzkrieg*. As military analysts focused on the European central front, however, there was considerable debate regarding

which military strategy could best meet that deterrent requirement.<sup>16</sup>

- *a conventional tripwire* to demonstrate commitment, but designed to fail quickly and rely on vertical escalation to deter.
- *horizontal escalation*, which assumed direct conventional defense was beyond America's reach, but deterrence could be strengthened by threatening the adversary's other interests.
- *conventional direct defense*: Many of the defense analysts characterized variously as "optimists" or "reformers" argued that a direct conventional defense (and, therefore, deterrence) was possible with modest reforms or improvements in troop deployment, employment, strategy or doctrine.

For a number of reasons, none of these strategies appear particularly appropriate or attractive in a post-cold war world. Trip-wire theories encourage nuclear use and, perhaps, nuclear proliferation, and fall into the same credibility traps of the past. Strategies of horizontal escalation are subject to the "spiral of conflict" critiques of deterrence, as well as to the argument that other regions might not be nearly as valuable as the focus of primary conflict—particularly when the challenger is a regional rather than a global power. Moreover, the United States and the world community are more interested in containing any conventional conflict, not expanding it. Structuring a direct conventional defense, in the past considered the most reliable of deterrent strategies, is less plausible in the future owing to the decline and retrenchment of U.S. general purpose forces and the uncertain nature of the threat. Which, then, appear to be the components of a military strategy that will effectively support the requirements of conventional deterrence in the new world order?

Put simply, and based on the theoretical requirements that continue to hold, a conventional deterrent strategy must be both capable and credible. If we delve more deeply into the requirements developed in the previous section, and apply

them to the problem of conducting regional deterrence on a global basis, a conventional strategy of deterrence can be seen to have the following essential characteristics:

- *General as opposed to immediate*: although the capability to invoke an immediate deterrent threat against a specific adversary must remain.
- *Extended as opposed to pure or fundamental*: This property has three components. First, the United States is not in danger of conventional attack on its homeland, but is seeking a way to extend deterrence and defense to vital regions, resources and interests. Extended conventional deterrence is far more credible, given the capability, than is extended nuclear deterrence, because it obviates the "trading Boston for Bonn" question. And although the United States will wish to maintain both strategic nuclear forces and theater nuclear power projection capability to deter the fractionated former Soviet empire as well as other potential proliferators, it appears that limited strategic and theater defenses will gradually replace some of the assured destruction deterrent theories enshrined in the ABM treaty. Second, we need to differentiate a cold war strategy deterring *global* threats from a post-cold war strategy deterring *regional* threats on a global scale. In other words, we are seeking a conventional capability that is *strategic* rather than *theater*. U.S. forces designed to deter will primarily be based in the Continental United States and therefore must have immediate global reach and power projection capability. Third, the implication of "global" or "strategic" capability is also one of a massive attack, although we may wish to eschew the term "massive conventional retaliation." The point is, if we have read Schelling, we don't want to admit it.<sup>17</sup> This formulation of deterrence strategy is the antithesis of the graduated escalatory response that characterized the cold war strategy in which sudden and massive escalation (fearful of the next, nuclear step) was



avoided at all costs. The purpose here is to terminate conflict rapidly.

- *Conventional as opposed to nuclear.* It is in the interest of United States to deemphasize nuclear deterrence, weapons and systems, particularly as the former Soviet nuclear threat diminishes (and, hopefully, with it, the nuclear capabilities and intentions of the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States). Conventional deterrence can also be seen as more effective than nuclear deterrence, as its capability is enhanced by the certainty (therefore, credibility) of its response. One of the striking differences regarding the future of conventional deterrence, at least in the near term, is that the United States enjoys an enormous margin of global reach and power projection capability over any immediately emerging conventional rival. Thus, the United States should not be self-deterred in a crisis, and the threat of use of conventional force, to include preemption, becomes more credible.<sup>18</sup>

Conventional deterrence in the post-cold war world, then, requires a new military strategy that can be extended credibly to distant regions, be quick in response and decisive in application. The military success enjoyed by the United States and its coalition allies in the Gulf War suggests that relatively small, but very powerful, precise, intense and survivable forces may be able to meet the theoretical requirements and strategic needs of extended conventional deterrence. If so, the properties that will characterize conventional deterrent strategy will be very different from those that defined it during the cold war. A strategy of effective conventional deterrence must be decoupled from nuclear threats, asymmetrical in threat and application, intense and overwhelming in its threat, offensive with a capability for punishment as well as denial, and extended globally through new technologies and weapons systems.

Based on this analysis, the United States is faced with developing a military strategy of conventional use that can be extended to interests abroad and can be generally applied.

The United States now requires the military strategy and forces to underwrite a theory of "general extended conventional deterrence." Can it be done?

**"General Extended Conventional Deterrence"  
and How to Get There.**

The United States has been placed in a difficult post-cold war dilemma. It must remain actively engaged in the new international order to ensure the stability that favors U.S. interests at home and abroad, while cutting U.S. defense expenditures in order to allow some "peace dividend" transfers to other budgetary accounts and, in general, contributing to U.S. global economic competitiveness. What do we want U.S. military forces to be able to accomplish in the new world order? Unfortunately, the list of U.S. national security goals has not been reduced:<sup>19</sup>

- Halt nuclear proliferation, reduce nuclear arms, lower the nuclear threat;
- Ensure favorable regional control and supply of oil at a reasonable price;
- Extend deterrence in contingencies known (Persian Gulf, Korea) and unknown;
- Maintain military capability to deter or fight major wars;
- Continue the cold war inhibitions against violent patterns of great power behavior;
- Provide reassurance to our allies, while holding a nuclear card.

These national security objectives are, for the most part, cold war goals that continue to apply. But even greater restrictions have been placed on the use of military force (and, therefore, on the formulation of conventional deterrence) since the Gulf War. Military planners are now receiving planning guidance that approximates the following:

- Plan to conduct an effective military campaign in a distant region to deter a sophisticated adversary. He

may possess unconventional (nuclear, biological, chemical) weapons and the capability to deliver those weapons within the region.

- Plan to use CONUS-based forces on very short notice. Although U.S. forces may be present in the region, they will not be there in numbers sufficient to conduct a stalwart defense or successful counterattack without immediate CONUS reinforcement.
- Plan on defeating the enemy with U.S. forces alone early in the campaign. Significant allied military contributions, with the exception of indigenous forces in some contingencies, will not be available until later in the war.
- Plan to defeat the enemy quickly by denying his objectives and, as required, by punishing his war-making infrastructure. Do this with as few friendly casualties as possible, while minimizing collateral damage.
- Plan to do all this as quickly as possible, before public support dissolves or allied resolve weakens. Hedge against the possibility of a second, simultaneous regional contingency and plan your forces assuming continuing declines in the U.S. defense budget in the near-to-mid-term.

These new defense planning factors might make a force planner pine for the good old days of the "two and one-half war" strategic concept; certainly they should alleviate the fears of anyone who was concerned that the U.S. military would have little to do in the new world order. Can a strategy of "general extended conventional deterrence," coupled with the military capabilities demonstrated during the Gulf War, meet such demanding guidance?

Some have suggested the U.S. military is already well on its way to meeting these goals. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* after the Gulf War, Bill Perry pointed to a "new conventional military capability" that "adds a powerful dimension to the ability of the

United States to deter war."<sup>20</sup> Key to this new capability were "a new generation of military support systems"—intelligence sensors, defense-suppression systems, precision-guided munitions, and stealth technologies—that gave true and dramatic meaning to the term "force multiplier." In order to avoid further such foreign entanglements in the future, Perry argued, the United States needs to use this new-found strength to deter future wars, not to fight them.

Critics of deterrence theory might be quick to note that Perry wrote the piece *after* the force had been used; after deterrence can be said to have "failed." Why should we presume that the military force used in the Gulf should be effective in deterring future conventional conflict? Answering that question requires a degree of speculation as to why conflict resulted with Iraq, and reinforces our proposition that conventional deterrence, to be effective, must rely on the occasional, purposeful and discriminate use of conventional force.

Given what we now know—what Saddam Hussein was prepared to suffer—the deterrent threat required in August 1990 may have been well beyond what could have been credibly fashioned. Absent the visible commitment of U.S. forces to the region, the effectiveness of conventional deterrence in the Gulf depended, almost totally, on an invitation from Arab states in the region to the United States to intervene—something they were very reluctant to offer until the invasion of Kuwait was a *fait accompli*. It is difficult, therefore, to conclude that deterrence "failed" in the Gulf because there was so little in place, in terms of commitment or capability, to deter the Iraqi invasion. Supporters of deterrence doctrine might also argue that rapid military and diplomatic measures by the United States and the UN deterred Iraq from moving beyond Kuwait into Saudi Arabia. But, as ever, aggressive intentions are difficult to prove. However, both supporters and critics of deterrence theory and strategy, in explaining the events leading to the crisis, would probably agree that Saddam apparently believed, or wanted to believe that:<sup>21</sup>

- The United States would not use force;

- The United States would not fight or risk heavy casualties;
- Regional Arab states would not accept U.S. troops on their soil; and,
- If Arab states did invite U.S. troops in, their governments would face severe internal disruption and, perhaps, be overthrown.

Of course, we know now that the United States did act, the Arab states did support U.S. troop presence (albeit somewhat fleetingly), and the capability of American forces and the credibility of American commitments were broadcast to the world in real and prime time. That demonstrated resolve and capability, as Perry has argued and as is being presented here, suggests that *the use of conventional force should be judged, rather than as a failure of conventional deterrence in a singular case, as an important element of establishing the credibility of a general, extended conventional deterrent in future crises*. It is not, as some have suggested, that Saddam Hussein was "un-deterrable," rather, it was that notions of how Saddam might be deterred were caught in the cold war mindset of conventional deterrence. This discrete, yet overwhelming use of conventional force, narrowly seen as a deterrent "failure" if one focuses on the single case study of Iraqi aggression in the summer of 1990, can also be seen, if some cold war theoretical baggage is jettisoned, as an important first step in the structuring of a new strategy of "general extended conventional deterrence" that may influence international relations for a decade or more.

While the United States currently attempts to exploit its military success in the Gulf with diplomatic and economic initiatives, there is plenty of work to be done if it is to retain the military capability of acting quickly and decisively in future contingencies. What kinds of capabilities and what sorts of forces are going to be required to underwrite a strategy of extended general conventional deterrence? Contemporary economic conditions demand prudent choices in planning forces to underwrite conventional deterrence. One approach

to help us choose wisely is to think of the military tasks that U.S. forces are most likely to confront:

- *Show of force*—force without war. With fewer U.S. forces stationed abroad, the need to project forces quickly to demonstrate U.S. commitment and resolve will remain important. Depending on the contingency, that force should be more than just the shadow of power—it will need sufficient, sustainable firepower.
- *Punitive raid*—the Libyan model. In response to a terrorist attack or in a preemptive conventional strike against unconventional capabilities, the United States must be able to strike multiple aim points (200 or so in order to attack weapons sites, suppress enemy defenses and take out command and control capabilities) simultaneously, across great distances, without seeking overflight, basing rights or access to facilities from any foreign state and to conduct that raid with impunity.
- *Police action*—Grenada and Panama. The United States will wish to retain the capability to restore order and protect U.S. citizens and property during times of turmoil and political unrest or government overthrow. The need is for the rapid deployment of light infantry forces with adequate air cover, and precursor air strikes as required.
- *Air superiority*—the war against Iraq. Air Force doctrine has long held that establishing air superiority is essential to allowing air-to-surface and surface warfare to be conducted successfully. During the first 24 hours of air strikes on Baghdad, for example, the emphasis was placed on targeting key military facilities and C<sup>3</sup> infrastructure to blind the enemy and disrupt his ability to use and control his forces.
- *Halting, delaying or disrupting a cross-border invasion*—what if Saddam Hussein had not halted at the Saudi border? In the earliest days of a conflict (such as one that might have occurred if Saddam had elected to continue his offensive along the Gulf littoral)

it may be necessary to bring in heavy firepower—available primarily through survivable, long-range airpower—to slow the onrush of enemy ground forces and buy time for the arrival of ground and naval forces or for other diplomatic and military actions.

- *Parallel (or simultaneous) warfare*—conducting an intense, coordinated coherent campaign. Although a concentration of U.S. military forces on a single aspect of enemy capability may be necessary in the first days of a conflict (and may even be required if resources are at a premium), the execution of parallel warfare, that is, concurrently executing multiple operations at every level of an enemy's target set, would prove far more effective in bringing the conflict to a rapid and decisive close while minimizing friendly casualties. Parallel warfare implies the ability to employ the kind of overwhelming but precise use of military force needed to underwrite a strategy of general extended conventional deterrence.

In summary, to make viable a theory of conventional deterrence that can be extended to general threats to U.S. global interests in the coming decade, there will be a need for the United States to construct a coherent military strategy to defend those interests, ensure stability, and challenge would-be aggressors to adjust to the new world order—or pay the price. It can be declared softly—so long as a big stick is nearby. Without the extensive forward deployment of U.S. military forces that characterized the cold war years, however, there will be a need for increased exercises and displays of power projection capability to demonstrate U.S. global reach. Those can be multilateral, two-way or humanitarian, even UN peacekeeping missions—so long as they are visible.

*Most important, and in the greatest departure from cold war formulations of conventional deterrence theory, it will be necessary to use the force in order for it to deter.* The Gulf War has provided the United States some leverage for the near term, but unwillingness to use the force—or a reluctance to declare that force will be used in moving from a general deterrent threat to an immediate one—will quickly squander that

opportunity to influence. Above all, we must stop setting impossible standards for conventional deterrence. It will inevitably break down on occasion, but such occasions provide the opportunity to demonstrate the price of failure, and rejuvenate the credibility of conventional deterrence, thereby contributing to a new period of stability. In other words, conventional deterrence can produce long cycles of stability instead of constant, overlapping intervals of conflict that are far more likely in the absence of a carefully constructed U.S. and allied deterrence capability.

The purpose of formulating a revised theory and strategy of general extended conventional deterrence is not only offered as a guide to military strategy in the post-cold war years, but also as a guide to planning the general purpose forces and capabilities the United States and its allies will need to underwrite that theory and strategy. At the macro-level, the implications for force planning for general extended conventional deterrence appear to be as follows:

- *For U.S. ground forces:* U.S. Army and Marine forces will need to retain the capabilities to serve both as a deterrent/defense force to protect vital U.S. interests abroad and as an intervention force to restore stability in Third World countries. In either case, a rapidly-deployable, flexible contingency force with an emphasis on airborne, air assault and light infantry forces will be required. Heavy, mechanized forces must be maintained to hedge against larger contingencies, but they will be diminished in role and size owing to the time it takes to deploy them from CONUS and the declining probability of their near-term use. Prepositioning, as available, can be used to lessen deployment time in key regions, and strategic airlift will remain important to get the troops to the war on time.
- *For U.S. naval and marine forces:* Power projection, rather than sea lane protection and control, will become the mainstay of U.S. naval forces, and the instruments of that task will remain the carrier battle groups and amphibious ready groups, augmented,



owing to their projected smaller numbers and force composition, by attack submarines employed in power projection roles.

- *For U.S. air forces:* Just as strategic air forces were the centerpiece of the strategy of "massive retaliation" in the 1950s, so will they be in underwriting extended conventional deterrence in the 1990s and beyond. Long-range strategic bombers, particularly limited numbers of stealthy ones, will play an ever more important role in the new world order because they are nondestabilizing, can carry large, varied, precise payloads, can project heavy firepower on short-notice from U.S. bases and are both flexible and survivable.

The thesis of this chapter has been that the United States has a major role to play in ensuring stability and security in a new world order and possesses unique military capabilities to deter acts of aggression that would threaten that order. However, the conventional deterrence theories and strategies of the past that were subordinated to a bipolar strategic nuclear competition are neither relevant nor welcome. A coherent concept of general extended conventional deterrence can guide U.S. military strategy in pursuit of a more stable and secure future international order and can assist prudent force planning within the reduced defense budgets of the 1990s.

## ENDNOTES

1. This chapter will focus only on the future of conventional deterrence, and does not address nuclear issues except to note that much of the theorizing about deterrence during the cold war was necessarily wrapped in bipolar and strategic nuclear thinking. For some recent (and divergent) work on the future of nuclear deterrence and forces, see "The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the New World Order," briefing by Thomas C. Reed, Chairman of the JSTPS/SAG Deterrence Study Group, October 19, 1991, and "National Security in the 1990s: Defining a New Basis for U.S. Military Forces," by Congressman Les Aspin, delivered to the Atlantic Council, January 6, 1992.

2. In August 1990, President Bush called for a defense policy of "peacetime engagement every bit as constant and committed to the defense of our interests in today's world as in the time of conflict and cold war." See "In Defense of Defense," President George Bush's speech to

the Aspen Institute Symposium, August 2, 1990, in Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, January 1991, p. 131.

3. See Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31, January 1979, pp. 289-294.

4. See Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete?", *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Spring 1990, p. 48.

5. Michael Howard, "Deterrence and Reassurance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2, Winter 1982-83, pp. 309-324. Howard argued that the problem was one not only of deterrence, but of reassurance: persuading one's own people, allies and friends that the benefits of military action, or preparation for it, will outweigh the costs. Howard's prescription for reassurance, in a cold war of nuclear parity, was conventional defense. The concept of conventional deterrence being advanced here for a post-cold war era should also reassure.

6. See George Quester, *Deterrence Before Hiroshima*, New Brunswick: Transaction Inc., 1986.

7. Classical deterrence theory was developed in the 1950s and 1960s by a group of "first wave" deterrence theorists including Brodie, Kaufmann, Kahn, Schelling and Snyder, who assumed, most importantly, that states could be treated as unitary rational actors. See "Deterrence in the Nuclear Age: The Search for Evidence" in Paul Stern, Robert Axelrod, Robert Jervis and Roy Radner, eds., *Perspectives on Deterrence*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

8. Patrick Morgan has called deterrence "the subject of one of the more elaborate attempts at rigorous theory in the social sciences." See Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977, p. 26. The following also relies on Paul K. Huth's definitions in *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

9. The concept of rationality is critical to thinking through the theory and application of deterrence. In the bipolar, strategic nuclear case, scholars and practitioners assumed that nations of conflicting ideologies and interests would behave rationally to avoid nuclear war. In a purely conventional case, the costs and risks of using force could also be compared, and a rational course of action selected. In a new world order, it is plausible that the concept of extended conventional deterrence being presented here could also deter nascent nuclear powers. It is certainly not clear that bipolar models of strategic nuclear deterrence will operate to restrain proliferators whose views of the possession and use of nuclear weapons may be considerably different from those formulated by the United States and USSR during the cold war.

10. Among the more prominent of deterrence critics, from which this list is taken, are Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. See their work, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

11. See Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974, and John Orme, "Deterrence Failures: A Second Look," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Spring 1987, pp. 96-104.

12. See John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 211.

13. Mearsheimer's *Conventional Deterrence* remains the best. The difficulty of separating conventional deterrence from its theater and strategic nuclear linkages is demonstrated in works such as those by Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, *Conventional Deterrence into the 1990s*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989, and Gary Guertner, *Deterrence and Defense in a Post-Nuclear World*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

14. See Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited."

15. In "Deterring Our Deterrent," *Foreign Policy*, No. 25, Winter 1976-77, Nitse argued that it would not be rational for the United States to respond with a countervalue nuclear strike after the USSR had launched an effective counterforce first strike on the United States, because of an assumed countervalue retaliation by the Soviet Union.

16. See Mearsheimer; and Joshua Epstein, *Strategy and Force Planning*, Washington: Brookings, 1987, pp. 6-7.

17. As pointed out by George Quester in "Some Thoughts on Deterrence Failures" in Stern, Axelrod, Jervis and Radner, p. 62. Perhaps, instead, practitioners of the new deterrence should reread Kissinger: "In my view, what appears balanced and safe in a crisis is often the most risky. Gradual escalation tempts the opponent to match every move; what is intended as a show of moderation may be interpreted as irresolution.... A leader...must be prepared to escalate rapidly and brutally." Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, Boston: Little Brown, p. 621, quoted in Huth.

18. Robert Gates, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, recently testified that the United States did not need to fear an attack on its homeland until the end of the decade. See "CIA Chief Says Threat by ex-Soviets is Small," *The New York Times*, January 29, 1992, p. A5.

19. See Robert Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Spring 1991, pp. 5-53.

---

20. William J. Perry, "Desert Storm and Deterrence," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 4, Fall 1991, pp. 66-82.

21. See Richard K. Herrmann, "The Middle East and the New World Order," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Fall 1991, pp. 42-75.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE: THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

George H. Quester

As the United States and its allies anticipate dramatic reductions in nuclear weapons, we must continue to face the question of "conventional deterrence." Is there indeed something that is an oxymoron here? Is it not true that we have seen the concept of "deterrence" emerge only in the wake of the enormous destructive power of *nuclear* weapons? Are there in fact any precedents and lessons to be extracted from the past, from the years before 1945?

One can indeed find some relevant lessons from the past by reviewing what deterrence has meant in the nuclear years, and by a closer look at some of the history. The lessons to be derived may be mixed and debatable at points, but they are still fundamental as we confront a new world without the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union.

#### Some Elementary Points.

Glenn Snyder published an analysis more than 30 years ago laying out the basic continuum of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment.<sup>1</sup> Wars have been "deterred" often enough in the past by the simple prospect of frustration and defeat for either side launching a war. Consider the situation of the Swiss Army and the Austrian Army facing off against each other, each quite capable of defending its own mountains where it knows the proper places for tactical defense, and each equally incapable of invading the other's mountains. What dissuades each side from attacking, even if political disagreements or greed and lust for power would otherwise cause them to attack, is the simple prospect that such an attack would fail and be fruitless (deterrence by denial), *and* lead to

the loss of a fair number of young soldiers' lives (deterrence by punishment). (We will have to return to speculate about whether this last element, the pain and loss of life, has been crucial to *conventional* deterrence; if all the attacker had to fear was that he would be—painlessly—repulsed, might he not have a try at the conquest anyway, on the off chance that it might succeed?)

Snyder makes the critical point that nuclear deterrence has relied much more heavily on punishment than denial, indeed that it works even when an attack could *not* be repulsed. Even if my armies could conquer your territory, while my air force and navy were destroying your air force and navy, the entire attack will not be launched, will be deterred, if *in the meantime* your navy and air force can deliver nuclear destruction to my cities. The destruction of my cities would make me lament the "victory" I had just won, and the prospect of this deters me from launching the war in the first place.

As we search for historical analogies, the obvious question then will be whether such capacities for intra-war retaliatory destruction appeared only with nuclear weapons, or had some important equivalent earlier, from which we can extract any relevant lessons and experience. There are indeed two such plausible equivalents here.

Moving backward in time, we come first to the presumptions made about the countervalue possibilities of aerial bombardment during World War II, and between the World Wars, and during World War I.<sup>2</sup> While such predictions turned out to be substantially wrong, they are nonetheless important as the premises upon which national planners and strategic theorists were operating. To make a long story short, many such analysts assumed that they were already equipped with, and burdened by, destructive capabilities in effect comparable to the atomic bomb. Extrapolating from the way the inhabitants of London and other cities had seemed unable to bear the primitive bombing raids of 1914 to 1918, such analysts (of whom Giulio Douhet<sup>3</sup> is the most publicized, but not the most profound, example) definitely sensed the ingredients for deterrence by punishment.

The second example comes even before the advent of flight, and is derived from the global growth of commerce in the 19th century, generating the prospect that the British Navy or any other major navy could inflict tremendous pain on an enemy, by harassing such commerce, by bombarding the coastal cities that had grown in connection with such commerce. As they considered how to exploit their preponderance of sea power after Trafalgar, British naval planners were thus quite conscious of the countervalue aspect of warfare, and of the possibility that this could be applied to dissuade an enemy from attacking British possessions.

We can illustrate this in one of the most basic British strategic problems of the 19th century, how to make certain that the United States would not invade to conquer (liberate) Canada.<sup>4</sup> Given the United States' geopolitically central position in North America, the problem was strikingly parallel to the British problem with regard to Czarist Russia and Eurasia, which of course became the U.S. problem after 1945 with regard to the Soviet Union and the defense of NATO. Whoever is at the center of a continental mass can move troops more easily into its peninsulas, while the defending power will have trouble in moving similar forces around by sea.

The British government, for decades, urged Canada to maintain a more robust militia system, just as the United States for decades urged the NATO countries to develop more extensive conventional defenses. Despite Canadian promises to generate such forces, they never quite came into being. Until the turn of the century, therefore, the real British fall-back for the security of Canada was not deterrence by denial (the U.S. Army potential demonstrated in the Civil War could not be stopped), but the prospect of punishment, as the British Navy would sail in to burn cities like Baltimore and Washington and New York and Boston. This would not have slowed the American advance into Ontario, but the prospect of it might work to cool American interest in such an attack (just as the nuclear bombing of Soviet cities might not have kept the Red Army from getting to Paris, but by its mere prospect worked to deter such an advance).

Lest one conclude that we are merely projecting such "pre-nuclear deterrence" mechanisms backward from our nuclear experience, it can be easily enough documented that more than these prerequisites of retaliatory destructive capability were there, indeed that some relatively sophisticated discussions of the deterrence mechanism were already developed at the time.

One of the clearest examples of the naval mechanism is to be found in the strategic writings of Sir Julian Corbett,<sup>5</sup> who became concerned at the beginning of the 20th century that Britain might have given in too much to the demands of the United States and other neutrals that the freedom of the seas now be respected, i.e., that the British naval blockades of the future be limited to purely military goods.

Extrapolating from naval warfare back to ground warfare and indeed to all warfare, Corbett (quoting a Prussian general, Von der Goltz) notes that military power, to be politically effective, may in the end have to be *punishment*, i.e., countervalue. While the classic and morally acceptable approach to warfare consisted of *denial*, i.e., a counterforce disarming of the enemy's military force, Corbett noted that the government and civilian population of the other side might still ignore and laugh off whatever directives we issued, if we were not somehow able to worsen the quality of their lives, if we are not able to impose some pain.

...battles are only the means to enabling you to do that which really brings wars to an end—that is, to exert pressure on the citizens and their collective life. 'After shattering the hostile main army,' says Von der Goltz, 'we still have the forcing of a peace as a separate and, in certain circumstances, more difficult task...to make the enemy's country feel the burdens of war with such weight that the desire for peace will prevail.'<sup>6</sup>

The basic point being made by Corbett through the quotation from Von der Goltz was that, despite the laws of war and the western tradition of moral philosophy, war can not simply be counterforce, with all countervalue punishment being eliminated. If we disarm the enemy's air force and army and navy, and then the other side's civilian population still



refuses to obey our orders, are we still forbidden to "attack civilians"? International law indeed forbids attacks on civilians, *until* the enemy has lost control over an area of territory and we have assumed that control. Once we have assumed a sovereignty over an area, however temporary, we are then free to "attack" civilians when they do not accept the edicts of our martial law.

One can project the same distinctions into our ordinary law in peacetime. Is the imprisonment of criminals meant to be counterforce or countervalue? A certain school of thought would argue that prisons should be made as humane as possible, that their sole legitimate function is to protect the rest of society against murderers and other violent people. Yet, if we need to imprison murderers for a counterforce purpose, to "disarm" them, what of embezzlers, who (once identified) will never be trusted again with a bank's money? Here the imprisonment is less to "deny" than to "punish," i.e., to deter similar acts in the future.

This entire chain, from imprisonment in civilian law to the punishments directed at civilians under the martial law of a foreign army, to blockades, to aerial bombardment, merely serves to illustrate that pain-infliction and deterrence are old concepts in international military and political practice. We have a real body of experience to tap on "conventional deterrence," offering lessons which will alternate between encouraging and discouraging.

For example, the British in 1914 ignored whatever pledges they had made to the United States and to the rest of the world about a "painless" blockade, attempting to coerce Imperial Germany into surrender by stopping food and all other imports. The prospect of the pain that British naval power could impose may or may not have been crucial for keeping U.S. troops out of Canada. In the end, the pain and suffering imposed by the naval force was very important for driving German forces out of France.

The first German air attacks on British cities in World War I were then in part rationalized as retaliation (escalation) for the countervalue naval blockade being imposed by the British

Navy. As noted, Londoners bore badly under the attacks of the German Zeppelin airships and then primitive biplane bombers, far less well than in the World War II "Blitz." Projecting forward from the 1914-18 experience, all the major powers thus approached World War II dreading air attack, with even Hitler showing significant concerns. By mechanisms we will have to discuss, the prospects of air attacks were not sufficient to deter the outbreak of war, as "deterrence failed" in 1939. For a time, however, the mechanism of aerial bombardment still seemed sufficiently awesome to deter its opposite equivalent, as one of the last messages despatched between Germany and Britain via Birger Dahlerus, the Swedish intermediary striving to avoid a war, was that the Luftwaffe would not bomb British cities as long as the RAF did not bomb German cities.

"Limited war" is logically the other side of the coin from deterrence, as each side fights with only part of its potential, precisely because the other side is doing the same. From September 1939 to the late spring of 1940, such a very strange kind of war was indeed undertaken, as each side so much feared what the other could inflict by aerial bombardment that it withheld what it could do itself.

The entire logic of the possibilities here had already been developed during World War I, as the British Imperial War Cabinet contemplated the uses it would make of aerial attacks. Should they be directed toward destroying the other side's air force, or toward destroying the other side's military capacity more generally, perhaps by attacks on population? Or, because such attacks on population were so painful, should such attacks be withheld, as a retaliation to be imposed only if the other side engages in such attacks?<sup>7</sup> As such options were contemplated after 1918, a fair number of theorists had come to lean in the direction of simple deterrence, whereby such aerial bombardment, typically expected to include poison gas attacks, would be used as a deterrent.

As an aside, one of the persisting issues of the cold war years was whether the Soviets really understood "deterrence," whether the Russian language even had a word for this concept. Various hawkish or even dovish Americans professed the view that it was somehow "ethnocentric" to

project this concept of deterrence onto others. "Deterrence" was allegedly an American concept, made up by American strategists.<sup>8</sup> At the minimum, we have shown here that it was understood by the British, and by Germans long before the 1950s wave of American strategic analysis of the subject, long before the atomic bomb.

It does have to be noted that the "limited air war" of 1939-40 did not stay limited. Just as "deterrence failed" by the mere fact that World War II even broke out, it failed also in that escalations occurred to all-out air war (but it did not "fail" in the ban imposed on chemical warfare after 1919, which somehow was adhered to all through the Second World War). Whatever lessons we will extract here will indeed have to take such "failures" into account.

Yet to note that the deterrence mechanism failed in these cases, i.e., did not persist in its effectiveness, is a far cry from reverting to the normal common-sense perception that there were no such mechanisms around in the pre-nuclear years. Pessimists about the future of deterrence have sometimes (at least before the breakup of the Warsaw Pact) come to the pessimistic conclusion that "conventional deterrence tends to fail." The most important task will be to calibrate the validity of this generalization.

### **Early "Extended Deterrence."**

There has really been less doubt and difficulty about whether basic nuclear deterrence would "succeed," once both the superpowers had acquired the ability to impose assured destruction. If the Soviet Union attacked and destroyed U.S. cities, the United States would retaliate by destroying Soviet cities; and vice versa.

The real anguish of all the discussions of deterrence theory since 1949 has pertained instead to whether "extended deterrence" was credible and workable, i.e., to whether the United States would be willing to escalate to all-out nuclear destruction if the Soviet Union had done nothing more than attack the cities of Europe (leaving those of North America untouched), or had done nothing more than send its tanks

forward to occupy and communize the cities of Europe. Would any rational and sensible American President expose the American population to nuclear attack, when the Soviet plan of aggression offered such a clear exemption from this?

Will there be a need for such extended deterrence after the events of 1989 and 1991, or is the threat of Soviet tank attack now weakened so much that this is a remedy for which there is no longer a disease? Was there any equivalent to such extended deterrence before nuclear weapons were invented, in the earlier days of "conventional deterrence"?

As we review the various mechanisms by which presidents from Truman to Bush renewed the American commitment to escalate on behalf of the Western European NATO countries, we can look for analogies to this from the past. Sometimes the link was established by simple "jaw-boning," in public statements and treaty commitments by which Europe was to become dear enough to the United States so that it would be seen as "the fifty-first state." Sometimes the key mechanism might rather have seemed to be the deployment of American troops abroad, so that they would be involved in combat if Europe was attacked, and so that American anger and commitments would be engaged. And often the key has seemed to be the deployment of U.S. "tactical" or "theater" nuclear weapons in the likely path of the Soviet advance, so that such weapons would have a fair probability of coming into use in the event of a Soviet attack, even if a "rational" U.S. President would probably have chosen not to use them when American cities still had not been attacked.

The analog to the symbolic commitment of the deployment of American troops forward is easy enough to find in earlier history, as with the well-known French response in 1905 to the question of how many British troops would be needed on a French defensive line against Germany: "One, and we will make certain he is killed on the first day."

Similarly, there are many examples of the commitments made by verbal statements, as with the British guarantees to Poland in 1939. It did not "naturally" make sense for Britain to enter a war if Poland were attacked, imposing naval blockade

and perhaps air attack on the Germans, rather than directly contributing to Polish defenses; but the statement once made became a matter of national honor, and would therefore change what was natural to do thereafter. One could hope that this mechanism of the "threat" would then work to deter the Germans from ever attacking Poland (even while it also risked German attacks on British commerce and German air raids on Britain in counter-retaliation, if deterrence failed, and the British threats then had to be carried through).

Yet the most important linkage for extended nuclear deterrence over the past 40 years may have been less the public statements of the various presidents, or even the presence of American forces on the scene (there were after all 500,000 American troops in Vietnam at the peak, and we still allowed that country to be conquered by Communist forces), but rather the simple physical presence in West Germany and South Korea of weapons of mass destruction, albeit labelled tactical nuclear weapons. If the Soviet tanks rolled, they would sooner or later overrun some batteries of such nuclear artillery, with these batteries then becoming a trip wire making escalation almost automatic. The "threat that leaves something to chance"<sup>9</sup> here included a decided risk that such weapons would be fired, rather than being allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy; and the follow-on risk was always that the destruction would be so large that uncontrollable escalation would follow, including the devastation of Moscow and other major Soviet cities, and indeed of all the world's cities. And the mere prospect of this then presumably kept Soviet tanks from ever being sent rolling forward; i.e., extended deterrence succeeded.

For this "trip-wire" mechanism of having the deadliest of weapons deployed forward, to eliminate doubts about whether they will be used, there is no such ready historical equivalent. Not enough destructive power was at hand to be put together into such small packages. What any single officer near the front elected to do in the heat of battle might simply not make enough difference. And, projecting forward into a world relying so much less on nuclear weapons in the future, it is similarly

more difficult to see how extended deterrence is to be made to work.

Britain, as an island and a maritime power, indeed had long felt the problem of how to make its threats credible around the world. If anyone were trying to take over all of Europe, it was always "naturally" credible that the British intervene on the side of the weaker party, to prevent a continental hegemony and head off threats to Britain itself. But what if the British commitment were instead to the self-government of Poland, not so directly linked yet to the immediate safety of the British Isles? Or what of the British commitment to the protection of India against Russian approaches, which so much worried the inventor of "geopolitics," Halford Mackinder,<sup>10</sup> or to the independence of Canada from the United States, these being two problems that vexed London all through the 19th century?

Deploying troops to India, and maintaining an Indian Army, and extending advance posts up to the Khyber Pass amounted to "deterrence by denial," which, as we have noted, is not really so very analogous to nuclear deterrence. Somewhat more analogous was the way the British applied the threats of their naval power in the 19th century for shielding Canada against the United States (unlike Czarist Russia, the United States was more vulnerable to the countervalue applications of a major navy). As noted at the outset, the basic British strategy was to threaten that, in the event of an American attack on Canada, the response would be as in the War of 1812, with attacks on American commercial ships, and on the American cities along the coasts. Washington might thus be burned again as in 1814, and Baltimore attacked, and many other cities, even while the British would have to fear some countervalue counterattacks on their own commerce from the numerically far-inferior U.S. Navy, in the tradition of John Paul Jones and the raiders of 1812.

But what made this form of "extended deterrence by punishment" so credible? Was it that some British naval vessels were deployed at bases along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada, so that they would "automatically" come into use if a war with the United States had broken out? The linkage is not strong enough here to amount to a "tripwire," because

no single naval vessel packaged the escalator destructive equivalent of a nuclear artillery battery of the U.S. The path of a U.S. ground advance toward Toronto, moreover, did not have to cross British naval bases in New Brunswick or on Vancouver Island.

The "extended deterrence" linkage was rather more like the situation in Europe from 1945 to 1949, when the Soviets had no nuclear weapons at all, and when the question of whether the United States would use its nuclear arsenal in response to a Soviet attack on Western Europe was thus very easy to answer. The U.S. Navy in 1876 had no way of destroying a city on the coast of England, while the British Navy indeed had a very plausible capability for imposing major destruction on Boston or New York or San Francisco. Even if Fourth of July speeches in the United States still called for the "liberation" of Canada from British imperial rule, extended deterrence was quite credible here.

DESERT STORM demonstrated how effective the conventional weapons of the U.S. armed forces can be, in countervalue impact now as well as counterforce. If the U.S. military, in purely conventional terms, thus remains as much superior to its opposite numbers through the 1990s as the British Navy was a century earlier, we may maintain some important possibilities of "extended nonnuclear deterrence by punishment" here. This thus amounts to one way in which this form of "extended deterrence" can still work, for those classic problem areas where an adversary would have the advantage over our allies if a conventional war ever broke out, and where our allies would otherwise be intimidated by this advantage.

It has to be stressed that there was always a double problem for Western Europe. The Soviet tanks might have actually rolled one day in an attempt at conquest, as such tanks had done in Korea in 1950; or the mere prospect of such a conventional aggression and conquest might have intimidated the West Europeans into steering their behavior in the direction Moscow desired (the latter being allegedly what had transpired somewhat in Finland since 1945, in what came to be labelled "Finlandization"). In the past, as in the future, the concerns are for both aspects of the problem, as the mere shadow of a small

possibility of military invasion can have important political effects.

The years of *nuclear* deterrence were years of an unusually strong need for extended deterrence, as Russian power had advanced much further westward than in Mackinder's day, sitting at the Fulda Gap, and were years of an unusually easy coupling for extended deterrence, as the "tactical" nuclear weapons deployed just west of the Fulda Gap might suffice to make such deterrence credible. As noted, the earlier episodes of such deterring extensions of commitment (what we may now have to call conventional extended deterrence), involved perhaps a less urgent need for such deterring of the military and geopolitical advantage, and less ability to couple so resoundingly.

### **The Proliferation Issue.**

As just noted, the coupling of extended deterrence in the nuclear years has depended on a degree of decentralization of command and control or of proliferation (which logically amount to the same thing, perhaps, as either increases the total of separate actors capable of initiating a nuclear war). An individual captain of artillery, or the French Premier, could at one time have caused nuclear escalation and the ultimate destruction of Moscow when Soviet tanks roll forward, and that kept them from rolling in the first place.

We have made the case that what the theorists of air warfare *assumed* they had between 1918 and 1939 amounted to the atomic bomb. One only has to read Douhet's description of what air raids would be like to sense how much the actual air raids of World War II undershot the levels predicted, this explaining why the mutual deterrence of air raids "worked" for a time between Hitler and the British, and then "failed."

What could happen to a single city in a single day could also happen to ten, twenty, fifty cities. And, since news travels fast, even without telegraph, telephone or radio, what, I ask you, would be the effect upon civilians of other cities, not yet stricken but equally subject to bombing attacks? What civil or military authority could keep order, public services functioning, and production going under such a



threat?...In short, normal life would be impossible in this constant nightmare of imminent death and destruction.<sup>11</sup>

Douhet's description of air raids might at first seem to match what actually occurred in Hamburg in 1943, and in Dresden and Tokyo in 1945, before nuclear weapons were even tested. But the important discrepancy is that such attacks with ordinary incendiary bombs constituted maximum efforts for the entire air forces executing them, such that the same fate could not have befallen other cities around Germany or around Japan on the same night. With nuclear warheads, one could indeed see the same holocaust in a great number of cities in a single evening.

A second very important difference is a corollary to this, for the nonnuclear destruction of a city, however awful as envisaged by the planners of the inter-war years, could never be packaged into one bomb, and thus could never pose such horrendous command and control problems. These are the command and control problems which we have perhaps exploited as the trip wire to make nuclear escalation and extended nuclear deterrence credible. These are the command and control problems which more generally worry us continuously, as we impose special psychological tests on all the officers assigned to such weapons, and install Permissive Action Links (PAL) to physically prevent unauthorized use.

A single bomber pilot could deliver enough destruction to begin World War III, and to plunge the world into the worst of thermonuclear exchanges. The missiles on board a single SLBM submarine may be enough to initiate nuclear winter. The result of such stark calculations is that the entire world now has to be very concerned about the breakup of the Soviet Union. A repetition of the August 1991 coup would arouse concerns about whether the nuclear weapons are locked up, or whether civil war could emerge in which rival factions brandished their nuclear weapons at each other and at the outside world's cities as well. Any more orderly secession of separate Soviet republics, in which nuclear weapons were carried off to become separate forces in a division of the inheritance, would

similarly be a major cause for concern, inside and outside the old USSR.

The general proliferation problem with nuclear weapons thus has no real equivalent yet with conventional weapons and conventional deterrence. The conventional air force of the United States can inflict damage comparable to nuclear weapons, as just demonstrated in Iraq (counterforce), and earlier demonstrated at Dresden and Tokyo (countervalue). But the Iraqi air force or the Israeli or Indian air forces will probably never be able to inflict damage by conventional means comparable to what they could deliver by nuclear.

Perhaps, by the phrase "conventional," we really mean weapons that are thus limited on how much destructiveness can be packaged. The total destruction that can be inflicted, in fire raids and in food blockades, is still severe, as hundreds of thousands of people die of influenza in the wake of malnutrition, etc. But only entire countries can muster this, and larger countries to boot, so that matching capabilities do not "proliferate," so that one such deterring countervalue capability can not be broken up into a dozen equally lethal packages, so that command and control do not become such an urgent problem, so that weapons can not so easily be deployed as "trip wires."

### **Chemical Weapons as Deadly Weapons.**

Does "conventional" with regard to weapons simply mean anything and everything that is nonnuclear? Or is it instead anything, as noted above, which does not offer extensive destruction in very small packages? Perhaps it is anything that does not involve an esoteric technology, esoteric by the standards, say, of 1910. Or is "conventional" anything that has not been banned by some international agreement? Where then do chemical weapons fit in?

The planners of the 1920s and 1930s expected that air raids would be much more destructive than what London experienced in the Blitz. Indeed, they expected that what Dresden experienced would occur quite often and quite early in a war. And a very important part of their calculations was

based on the use of chemical weapons in such air attacks, along with the explosive and incendiary bombs that were indeed to be dropped. One of the more remarkable examples of "conventional deterrence" therefore, for the duration of World War II, was indeed that chemical weapons were not used on either side.

If the bans on such weapons are renewed, even after the recent breakdowns between Iran and Iraq, these may then go on the shelf along with nuclear weapons. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argues that the only appropriate role for nuclear weapons is to deter the use of nuclear weapons on the other side.<sup>12</sup> Many will feel that the only appropriate use of chemical weapons is similarly to deter the use of chemical weapons on the other side. When we then speak of "conventional deterrence," i.e., whether war overall can be deterred, we would be leaving chemical weapons out of the picture just as we omit the nuclear.

If our discussion of conventional deterrence takes off instead mainly from the world's aversion to *nuclear* weaponry, then, in light of recent trends in international military practice, chemical weapons may become more legitimized. But will chemical weapons, and/or biological weapons, then amount to the "poor man's H-bomb"? Will there be enough destructive power packaged together here so that new "trip wires" can be erected to make extended deterrence real, and so that all the logically equivalent worries about proliferation and command and control will then have to emerge?

The decisions taken by President Bush and the U.S. Government, in pushing ahead with DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, amount at least to a certain debunking and shrugging off of the countervalue, as well as counterforce, awesomeness of chemical and biological weapons, and Saddam Hussein in the end elected not to use such weapons, even though extensive use had been made against Iran. Was this all because the United States was well equipped with protection against such weapons, or was it because the United States was so well equipped with other conventional weapons that it could blunt and work around the Iraqi chemical arsenal? Some might conclude that the Iraqi restraints here should be

credited instead to the U.S. arsenal of nuclear weapons, with which Bush could still always have retaliated for any Iraqi CBW escalation.

Further breakthroughs remain possible in enhancing the deadliness of CBW weapons, or in enhancing their battlefield impact. Such chemical or biological weapons in the end will probably settle between nuclear and conventional weapons with reference to several of the key attributes that we have been discussing here. They will be able to pose the threat of very major countervalue damage, but they will never quite do this in such small packages, entailing a single push of a button, as thermonuclear weapons. If a single submarine can today pose nuclear winter on the world, with everyone's concern then having to be addressed to ensuring that the commanders of that submarine do not go berserk, there is not likely to be an equivalent of this in CBW. If a single nuclear artillery battery near the Fulda Gap could have imposed enough damage to initiate a chain of escalation that led to nuclear war, there may similarly not be enough catalytic impact in what a single such artillery battery could now do with CBW munitions.

### **Targeting for Surgical Strikes.**

There is one more major difference to be discussed in how conventional deterrence would work, for conventional weapons can now be coupled to greatly enhanced accuracies to produce finally what we have long advertised as surgical strikes, destroying what we seek, while avoiding the destruction of other targets.

Nuclear deterrence was burdened with hefty doses of collateral damage, almost no matter how the attack would be carried out. At times, this collateral damage has actually been welcomed, labelled as "bonus destruction," as a way of getting around the immorality of targeting the innocent to deter the guilty. Hiroshima was thus labelled a "military target" in 1945, and the Strategic Air Command found military targets in virtually every major city of the Soviet Union. If one had wished to hit *only* military targets, or had wished to target only the

Communist party leadership, it would have been difficult to carry this off.

As now previewed in the massive conventional air attacks on Iraq, however, it has become possible to aim precisely for command posts and for national leaders with conventional weapons, or only for military personnel in uniform, with a fair chance of avoiding massive killing of the civilians and the innocent. If Saddam Hussein escaped this form of high-technology punishment or assassination in 1991, it was indeed a close call, as also for Khaddafy earlier, and the trend is definitely to make such leaders marked men.

An elementary understanding of deterrence logic suggests that one would not always want to punish or kill the leadership on the other side, for sometimes these will be people who are indispensable to the negotiation process. Much will depend on our intelligence estimates of who is playing what role. In the case of DESERT STORM, the expectation was indeed that it would be easier to achieve peace with Iraq if Saddam Hussein were killed. In World War II, it might similarly have been easier to produce a German surrender and capitulation if Hitler were removed from the scene, and the U.S. Air Force did attempt one such operation against Berchtesgaden. By contrast, it would have been a great disaster for our hopes of terminating the war with Japan if the Emperor had been killed, for he proved crucial to accomplishing the Japanese surrender after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

One must remember that the level of total destruction imposed on Tokyo in the "conventional" fire-bombing of March 1945 was very comparable to the casualties imposed on Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Yet there was one tremendous difference. In the 334 bomber incendiary raid on Tokyo, it was extremely likely that the Emperor would not die in the attack, as Japanese civil defense procedures would see to it that he was gotten to safety. Had the first atomic bomb been dropped on Tokyo, the Emperor would have been just as likely to die as anyone else in this surprise single-airplane attack.

Even in World War II, therefore, conventional weapons allowed the inflictor of retaliatory punishment to destroy one

target while preserving another, and this will be much more the pattern in the future. Cities can be attacked, or can be spared. National leaders can be spared, or can be attacked. Military forces can be attacked without anything like the maximum attack on other targets. Or, if the military seemed to be enlistable to restoring what we need, it could be spared while things it valued, its home towns or electric power plants or national parks, were attacked.

### **Chemical Weapons as Discriminate Weapons.**

As noted above, chemical weapons may be the wild card in all of our predictions here, perhaps offering the "poor man's H-bomb," perhaps not. If the world turns very much against nuclear weapons, and if, at the same time, the precedents set in the Iran-Iraq War have eroded the taboo against chemical warfare, we may yet see CBW deterrence becoming an important part of conventional deterrence, and/or a replacement for nuclear deterrence.<sup>13</sup>

Yet there is a different aspect of chemical warfare that some of its advocates would now intervene to address here, namely that such weapons do not have to be deadly, indeed may offer almost totally nonlethal ways of fighting wars. If conventional warheads mated with high-accuracy delivery systems are markedly more discriminate than nuclear weapons, than even more discrimination and avoidance of unwanted damage, perhaps an avoidance of all permanent countervalue impact, can be achieved in the fuller development of CBW, especially of chemical weapons.

Chemical warfare was banned by international covenant in the 1920s, but this was at least in part a propaganda effort to impute evil to Germany; chemical weapons had been a German strong suit (allegedly used by the Germans first in World War I) and thus had to be painted as an illegitimate weapon. Yet the advocates of such weapons could cite World War I statistics to argue that these were ultimately the most humane instrument, disabling enemy machine guns without killing the soldiers manning such guns. The elementary ratio of disablement (counterforce) to death or crippling injury

(countervalue) was better for poison gas than for rifle fire or machine gun or artillery fire, or bayonets or hand grenades, so why were such weapons to be banned?

An even stronger case can be made seven decades later, when totally nonlethal and noninjuring gases are possible, simply incapacitating a force of enemy soldiers as police would incapacitate a crowd of rioters. The irony of international law is that chemical warfare today can be used legally *only* on civilians. Where civilians are supposed to be exempt from attack by "conventional" weapons and by nuclear (lots of luck!), only *soldiers* are legally exempt from all chemical attack. A government can use tear gas on its own civilians (and on enemy civilians, once their territory has been occupied) and this is indeed now the most approved weapon for use against civilians; the Chinese government would have drawn much less disapproval for its handling of the students in Tiaranmen if it, rather than gunfire, had been equipped for, and disposed to use, such nonlethal weapons. But a government can not legally use even such a nonlethal chemical weapon against the enemy's soldiers in uniform (except when they have already laid down their arms to become prisoners of war).

The argument for resisting such a lifting of the taboo against chemical and biological warfare is a powerful one, for taboos can not easily be realigned or replaced once they are tampered with. While some very nonlethal weapons might be introduced, the same entire category of weapons includes new possibilities of supremely deadly weapons, as new diseases are perfected and new epidemics are launched, as deadly instruments are developed that might indeed be packaged as small as an A-bomb or H-bomb. The legitimation of new techniques of deadliness would aggravate all of the concerns on proliferation and command and control rehearsed above.

Yet, as noted, the strength of the taboo against chemical warfare is already in question, and the choice may not be entirely ours on whether such weapons continue to be beyond the pale. As we thus speculate about a world in which nuclear weapons are more and more under a taboo, this may be a world where chemical weapons are, relatively, or absolutely, less so.

If the extreme of such nonlethal chemical warfare were to be that soldiers would suffer nothing in combat except being put to sleep for a night, to wake the next morning in a POW camp, what would this then mean for deterrence as we know it? "War" might then become no more destructive than a football game, and might thus become too attractive. But deterrence is about making things unattractive.

We must return to the fundamental philosophical question posed by Sir Julian Corbett, on whether military power can ever be politically meaningful if there is no pain or spoiling of people's lives involved. The ultimate conclusion here would have to be that *any* kind of deterrence will continue to entail the imposition of suffering, even while the rules of civilization as they are applied to warfare continually claim to outlaw unnecessary suffering. In the artillery exchanges across the Suez Canal in 1970, the Egyptians and Israelis were attacking only "military targets" as men in uniform on each side were killed or wounded. Yet the intent on each side was to impose *pain*, as letters would have to be sent home to grieving parents, as each side was trying to force the other to make concessions by such pain. The same obviously holds for the terrorist attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, officially a counterforce military target, but a target chosen in no sense because its loss would incapacitate U.S. military power. And, on an enormously larger scale, the same held for Falkenhayn's 1916 World War I offensive at Verdun, designed to lure the French into a defensive position where they would suffer very high casualties, thus reducing their national willingness to persist with the war.

Chemical weapons may thus offer the physical *capacity* for totally nonlethal and noncountervalue war, much as with the Argentine use of rubber bullets in the initial invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1981; but the capacity for countervalue will remain, and will almost surely be applied, indeed will have to be applied if there is to be any determinacy to deterrence patterns and patterns of peace and war.



## ENDNOTES

1. Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961.

2. This author's elaborated analysis of these periods can be found in George H. Quester, *Deterrence Before Hiroshima*, New York: John Wiley, 1966.

3. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, New York: Coward-McCann, 1942.

4. See Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and The Balance of Power in North America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

5. Sir Julian Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy*, London: Conway Maritime Press, 1911.

6. *Ibid*, p. 94.

7. See H.A. Jones, *The War in the Air*, Vol. V, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935.

8. For an example of such an argument, see Richard B. Foster, "On Prolonged Nuclear War," *International Security Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Winter 1981-1982, pp. 497-518.

9. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 182-203.

10. The fully-developed version of what he began presenting at the beginning of the 20th century is to be found Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1962.

11. Douhet, p. 58.

12. Robert S. McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Fall 1983, pp. 59-80.

13. On the prospects for chemical warfare in general, see Victor Utgoff, *The Challenge of Chemical Weapons*, London: MacMillan, 1990.

## CONCLUSIONS

Gary L. Guertner

Conventional deterrence has a future, but one very different from its past in which it was subordinated to nuclear threats and derived from classic strategic nuclear theory. The United States now faces a multipolar international political system that may be destabilized by a proliferation of armed conflict and advanced weaponry. To secure stability, security and influence in this new world order, the United States can use the military prowess it demonstrated in the Gulf War to good advantage. However, using that force effectively, or threatening to use it, requires the formulation of a coherent theory of "general extended conventional deterrence" and the prudent planning of general purpose forces that are credible and capable of underwriting this new military strategy.

This study has looked at both history (George Quester) and the future (Robert Haffa) for lessons and concepts that are applicable to a new military strategy based on conventional deterrence. Neither proponents nor critics should judge this work in isolation. Conventional deterrence cannot succeed unless it is underwritten by supporting policies and concepts. The strategic concepts with the greatest synergistic value in the future appear to be:<sup>1</sup>

- Technological superiority,
- Collective security,
- Strategic agility, and
- Theater defenses.

*Technological Superiority.* Reductions in the base force will make the force-multiplying effects of technological superiority more important than ever. Space-based sensors, defense-suppression systems, "smart weapons," and stealth technologies give true meaning to the concept of force multipliers. This broad mix of technologies can make

conventional forces decisive provided that they are planned and integrated into an effective doctrine and concept of operations. The most likely conflicts involving the United States will be against less capable states that have trouble employing their forces and their technology in effective combined arms operations. As Tony Cordesman has concluded in his assessment of the Gulf War,

...the U.S. can cut its force structure and still maintain a decisive military edge over most threats in the Third World. It can exploit the heritage of four decades of arming to fight a far more sophisticated and combat ready enemy so that it can fight under conditions where it is outnumbered or suffers from significant operational disadvantages.<sup>2</sup>

*Collective Security.* Collective security has become explicitly incorporated in national military strategy. It is broadly defined to include both collective security (United Nations-sanctioned activities) and collective defense (formal alliances such as NATO) arrangements. These are linked informally in what could become a seamless web of collective action.<sup>3</sup>

The potential value of collective security to conventional deterrence is difficult to quantify because it requires the United States to link its security to the capabilities and political will of others. Its potential must always be balanced against the risk that collective action may require significant limitations on unilateral action. Nevertheless, there are two compelling reasons for the United States to embrace collective security:

- First, the American public shows little enthusiasm for an active role as the single, global superpower. Collective deterrence is politically essential for sharing not only the military burden, but also the increasingly salient political and fiscal responsibilities as well.
- Second, patterns of collective action, as demonstrated in the Gulf War, give conventional deterrence credibility and capabilities that the United States can no longer afford or achieve on its own. Even though collective action and shared capabilities may limit our freedom of action, these limits are reassuring to others

and may contribute more to stability than attempts by the world's only superpower to unilaterally impose deterrence—nuclear or conventional.

*Strategic Agility.* Strategic agility is a generic concept that reflects the dramatic changes in cold war forward deployment patterns that fixed U.S. forces on the most threatened frontiers in Germany and Korea. Old planning assumptions have given way to new requirements to meet diffuse regional contingencies. Simply stated, American forces will be assembled by the rapid movement from wherever they are to wherever they are needed. Strategic agility requires mobile forces and adaptive planning for a diverse range of options. Many of these options signal our commitment and demonstrate military capabilities short of war. With reduced forward deployment of forces, joint exercises, UN peacekeeping missions, and even humanitarian/disaster relief operations (*Provide Comfort*, for example) yield opportunities to display power projection capabilities and global reach.

*Theater Ballistic Missile Defenses.* Nuclear and chemical weapons proliferation make theater air and antitactical ballistic missile defenses an important component of conventional deterrence. The next states that are likely to acquire nuclear arms are under radical regimes that are openly hostile to U.S. interests (North Korea, Libya, Iran, and Iraq, if UN intervention fails).<sup>4</sup> The success of such regional powers in creating even a small nuclear umbrella under which they could commit aggression would represent a serious challenge to our global strategy.

Theater defenses in support of conventional deterrence need not be a part of the grander objectives of the Strategic Defense Initiative or its most recent variant, Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS). The layered, space-based weapons architecture of these costly systems seem, at best, technologically remote and, at worst, vestiges of the cold war.<sup>5</sup> What is needed in the near term is a global, space-based early warning, command and control network that is linked to modernized, mobile, land-based theater defense systems (Patriot follow-on or Theater High-Altitude Area Defense

[THAAD] interceptors designed for greater defense of countervalue targets).

Uncertainties about nondeterrable nuclear threats make it all the more imperative that the United States also have credible warfighting options. Nuclear preemption prior to an attack is not plausible, and there are uncertainties as to whether the president or his coalition partners would authorize a response in kind, even after nuclear first-use by the enemy. More plausible are the range of conventional options afforded by modern, high-tech weapons:

- Conventional preemption of the nuclear/chemical infrastructure and key command and control nodes to deny or disrupt an attack (deterrence by denial).
- Threats of conventional escalation to countervalue targets if nuclear weapons are used (deterrence by punishment).
- Threats to seize enemy territory (deterrence by punishment).
- Countervalue retaliation by conventional forces if deterrence and preemption fail (deterrence by punishment).
- Theater antitactical missile and air defenses (deterrence by denial).

The air war against Iraq demonstrated the limitations of counterforce targeting against missiles and nuclear/chemical infrastructures. The imperfect capability of deterrence by denial (even with nuclear weapons) and the unknowable responses to threats of retaliation and punishment leave theater antitactical ballistic missile defenses as the last line of defense for U.S. and coalition forces. On balance, conventional deterrence that combines attempts to dissuade, capabilities to neutralize or capture, credible threats to retaliate, and the ability to defend is more credible than nuclear threats against regional powers. Together, these capabilities dramatically reduce the coercive potential of Third World nuclear programs.

This does not mean, however, that nuclear forces have no role to play in the future of deterrence.

### **The Role of Nuclear Weapons in a Conventional Force-Dominant Deterrent.**

*The National Military Strategy 1992* states that the purpose of nuclear forces is "to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction and to serve as a hedge against the emergence of an overwhelming conventional threat."<sup>6</sup>

The dilemma confronting the United States is still the same classic problem that confronted strategists throughout the cold war. Nuclear weapons fulfill their declared deterrence function only if they are never used. Yet, if everyone knows that they will never be used, they lack the credibility to deter.<sup>7</sup> The most credible means to resolve this dilemma is through a combination of declaratory policies and military capability that emphasizes the warfighting capabilities of conventional forces with strategic reach.

There is, however, a potential paradox of success if aggressive Third World leaders believe that only weapons of mass destruction can offset U.S. advantages in conventional military power. Under such circumstances, theater nuclear weapons can have important signaling functions that communicate new risks and introduce greater costs for nuclear aggression that inflicts high casualties on U.S. forces or on allied countervalue targets.

Nuclear signaling can take the form of presidential or DOD declarations that U.S. ships deploying to a hostile theater of operations have been refitted with nuclear weapons carried by dual-capable aircraft (DCA) and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAM).<sup>8</sup> Deployment options alone can play a critical role in the strategic calculus of aggressors who possess uncommitted nuclear capabilities.

The role of strategic nuclear forces is also directly related to the problems of reorienting the National Military Strategy from a global to a regional focus. The first problem is determining the force structure after the combined reductions

of the START Treaty, unilateral initiatives, and reciprocal arrangements with the Russian Republic. The results will be dramatic cuts in U.S. strategic forces from some 12,000 strategic warheads to approximately 4,000 or less.<sup>9</sup> These cuts are prudent responses to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and give us a long-sought opportunity to pull back from the nuclear brink where we so often found ourselves during the cold war. Moreover, these reductions fulfill our obligations under the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). They should be accompanied by strong U.S. endorsements of the treaty and support for the strengthening of the nonproliferation regime as we move toward a critical NPT review conference in 1995.

The credibility of U.S. support for nonproliferation will also be affected by the declaratory policies and targeting strategy for a smaller strategic nuclear force structure. The most comprehensive review of the problem to date suggests that we could be moving in the right direction provided that the strategic role of conventional forces dominates future planning. A report by the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff Advisory Group, chaired by former Secretary of the Air Force Thomas C. Reed, recommends major changes in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP).

The cold war SIOP contained carefully calibrated strike options against the former Soviet Union. In its place, the panel recommends an Integrated Strike Employment Plan (ISEP) with a "near real time" flexibility to cover a wider range of targets with a smaller force structure. The proposal identifies five categories of plans:<sup>10</sup>

- *Plan Alpha* is a conventional force option against selective strategic targets of "every reasonable adversary."
- *Plan Echo* is a nuclear option for theater contingencies or "Nuclear Expeditionary Forces."
- *Plan Lima* is a limited SIOP-like nuclear option against the former Soviet Union.
- *Plan Mike* is a more robust version of *Plan Lima*.

- *Plan Romeo* is a strategic nuclear reserve force (SRF) to deter escalation, support war termination, and preclude other nuclear powers not involved from coercing the United States.

In their current form, these recommendations are imbalanced and favor a nuclear force structure that is not well suited for credible deterrence in the New World Order. If they were adopted as official policy, the United States would be declaring the value of nuclear weapons at the same time that it was asking others to forswear them. Even though the United States may be a benevolent superpower, the political impact of global nuclear targeting is more likely to stimulate rather than deter nuclear proliferation. An alternative set of declaratory policies that are consistent with nonproliferation include commitments to deep cuts in nuclear forces coupled with a *defensive* strategy of retaliation against nuclear attacks on U.S. territory. Direct retaliation is one of the few credible missions for strategic nuclear forces in the post-cold war world. Extending deterrence should be a function of conventional forces.

Global retargeting by nuclear forces is an unfortunate concept that is more likely to put American interests at risk in the long run. Marshal Shaposhnikov, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armed Forces, struck a more positive image in his correct observation that retargeting frightens people. It is better, he said, to discuss "nontargeting," which lowers the level of alert to "zero flight assignments of missiles."<sup>11</sup>

The Marshal's formulations are too vague to serve as the basis of national policy. Nevertheless, his point should not be dismissed. The objectives of national military strategy are more likely to be achieved through the *implicit* flexibility to respond to nuclear aggression from any source rather than *explicit* declarations of global nuclear targeting.

Finally, and above all, this study's primary purpose has been to recommend the option of using modern conventional forces for strategic purposes. A reliance on offensive nuclear weapons carries enormous risks that brought us to the brink of war during several cold war crises. The American public has



every right to expect that the cold war's principal legacy of danger not be deliberately extended into the New World Order.

## ENDNOTES

1. These strategic concepts are drawn from *The National Military Strategy 1992*, released by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in January 1992. Some have been narrowed in scope for ease of analysis. For example, the NMS lists strategic deterrence and defense as one of the four foundations on which our strategy is built. This study narrows this strategic concept to conventional deterrence and theater defense.

2. Anthony H. Cordesman, "Compensating For Smaller Forces: Adjusting Ways and Means Through Technology." Paper presented at the Third Annual Strategy Conference, U.S. Army War College, February 14, 1992, p. 2.

3. For a detailed assessment of collective security and U.S. strategy, see Inis Claude, Jr., Sheldon Simon, and Douglas Stuart, *Collective Security in Asia and Europe*, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 1992. Ironically, the administration's pledge to support growing UN peacekeeping activities is under attack by members of Congress because of a longstanding agreement that makes the United States responsible for 30 percent of the cost of every operation. Japan and Western Europeans could conceivably relieve part of the perceived inequity, but Congress should also examine these costs in the larger context of collective security and global stability. See Don Oberdorfer, "Lawmakers Balk at Peacekeeping's Cost," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1992, p. A17.

4. Leonard S. Spector, "Deterring Regional Threats From Nuclear Proliferation." Paper presented at the Third Annual Strategy Conference, U.S. Army War College, February 14, 1992, p. 31 and Appendix A.

5. In his testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on December 10, 1991, CIA Director Robert Gates stated that only Russian and Chinese missiles could threaten the territory of the United States. He did not expect direct risks from other countries for at least another decade. See *Statement of The Director of Central Intelligence*, pp. 16-17.

6. *The National Military Strategy 1992*, p. 13.

7. Robert Haffa's chapter argues that conventional deterrence must occasionally give way to conflicts that demonstrate capabilities, thereby strengthening deterrence for a new phase of stability. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had much the same effect on nuclear deterrence.

8. President Bush's unilateral initiatives in September 1991 eliminated ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons and withdrew them from surface ships and submarines. Some sea-based weapons are scheduled for destruction. Others are in storage from where they can be redeployed for the "signaling" purposes advocated here.

9. President Bush's January 1992 initiative pledged cuts in strategic nuclear warheads up to 50 percent below START-permitted ceilings of approximately 8,000 warheads.

10. Thomas C. Reed and Michael O. Wheeler, "The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the New World Order," JSTPS/SAG Deterrence Study Group, October 19, 1991, pp. 33-34. See also R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Urged to Cut 50% of A-Arms," *The Washington Post*, January 6, 1992, p. A1.

11. Marshal Ye. I. Shaposhnikov, interview in *Red Star*, February 22, 1992, pp. 1-3. Quoted in *FBIS-SOV-92-036*, February 24, 1992, p. 8.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

GARY L. GUERTNER is the Director of Research at the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Political Science from the University of Arizona and a Ph.D. in International Relations from the Claremont Graduate School. A former Marine Corps officer and veteran of Vietnam, Dr. Guertner has also served on the staff of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and as a Professor of Political Science at California State University, Fullerton. His latest book is *Deterrence and Defense in a Post-Nuclear World*.

ROBERT P. HAFFA, JR. is a Senior Analyst with the Northrop Corporation in Washington, D.C. Dr. Haffa received a B.S. degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy, a M.A. degree from Georgetown University, and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College and the National War College, and was a Senior Fellow at the National Defense University. As a lecturer in international politics at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Haffa teaches courses in American defense policy and force planning. He is the author of two books, *The Half War* and *Planning U.S. Forces* as well as numerous articles and book reviews.

GEORGE H. QUESTER is Chairman of the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, where he teaches courses on defense policy and arms control and on U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of numerous books and journal articles on international politics and international security.

**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE**

**Major General William A. Stofft  
Commandant**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE**

**Director  
Karl W. Robinson**

**Director of Research  
Gary L. Guertner**

**Editor  
Marianne P. Cowling**

**Secretary  
Patricia A. Bonneau**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**Cover Artist  
Lawrence C. Miller**

**Composition  
Daniel B. Barnett**